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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 09 – “Ramifications”

Axel had called his little sister, explaining the situation at paw and just like Victoria had predicted earlier, Wilhelmine Andersdatter did not need to be told who the buff-colored femme feline was when Dana had walked in. And just like Axel and Gytha, Dana had remembered her life as a *Hedmi* just as clear as day. The original Svensen femmes and Madelyn were currently fawning over little Sabrina who was busy soaking up the attention like an industrial-class cleaning sponge.

Victoria, Conrad and Frank were the only tigers that Wilhelmine had ever observed in her lifetime so she was really taken aback by the little Kashnikov's buff and brown coloration. She also commented that she could see a lot of Victoria's features in little Sabrina's face, even though the method of Dana coming to be on this planet had been carefully explained to the blond equine femme.

Torvald was busy trying to bring Maryanne up to speed with the workings of the modern world, so the tigress was musing about the situation at paw. What was happening here was just over the top, as far as she was concerned and they would just have to find a way to deal with it, just as they have always done. Tor was probably more upset with this situation than she was, Victoria had decided, since Maryanne's 'condition' and the issue of a possible illegal marriage between Tor and herself did seem to bother the huge fur to no end. She was giving thought to that situation when Frank got her attention.

“Vicki, I . . . I think I should get in touch with my family.” he suggested.

“I agree, Frank but we need to check on something that I just thought about.” Victoria replied. “If you would help me take off these split-casts, we need to look up some facts.” Getting her sister's attention, she asked for some additional help. “Val, could you find my laptop for me?”

“It's in your bedroom,” the younger striped femme replied, going to get the item in question. Once she returned with it, Frank asked about this strange thing in Victoria's possession.

“Vicki, what is that thing you called a laptop?” he queried.

“It's a computer, Frank. There have been major leaps in computing since we were in high school.” she replied. “There is also a thing called 'The Internet'. You might remember our science instructor, Mister Coleridge talking about the government creating what he called the ARPANET and scientists using computers to communicate with one another over long distances. Well, that became what we call 'The Internet' today.”

“That sounds pretty far out there, Vicki.” the male tiger offered up. “You're telling me that you can talk on that thing to some fur that's far away? I thought Mister Coleridge was just trying to blow smoke up our butts when he said that.”

“Frank, you're going to need to keep an open mind about things in general.” Valerie chimed in. “The world has really changed technologically since we were in school.”

Victoria brought up a browser window and did a search on Ceres, California, the year 1981. She remembered that precise date quite clearly. Adding a few more search parameters such as month, day and the name 'Franklin Hellyer', she located a page from the Modesto Bee; It was Frank's obituary.

A quick scan of it proved what she had suspected all along; her former boyfriend had been declared drown by the sheriff's department but his body was never recovered. The paper said the deputies had searched over one-hundred miles of irrigation canals in search of Frank's body but the rescue operation had been called off a few days after the accident. The tigress searched a few more links only to find one that was the trial of her brother for Frank's death.

“Um, Frank, you were most likely snatched from Uriel's grasp by a Dark Agent.” the elder striped femme offered up. “Originally, you were still belted into Wally's car when the rescue furs arrived at the accident scene. Now that the Malefic Council has interfered, your body was never found so technically, you could just go back to being yourself. I think we might want to have my Mom to go over and see your parents first, before you approach them personally.”

“So, I'm not dead.” he said almost reverently. “What about Wally? I mean, I saw on that screen that he was tried for my death . . .”

“I don't know if things have changed for him, Frank. I hate to admit that I shunned him for decades, blaming him for your death.” Vicki replied. What she couldn't see behind her was her sister Valerie, dialing their brother's phone number. Some fur picked up on the other end, making the younger Connell tigress smile.

“Hello Sarah Noel, this is your Aunt Valerie. Is your father at home?” she asked quietly. “Yes, please. I would like to talk to him.” she added.

###

Wally Connell was working in his garage, sharpening the blade on his electric rotary lawnmower. He had struggled to mow the front yard so he had decided the blade might be very dull. Upon closer examination, his thoughts were confirmed.

He had finished working the dings out of the cutting edge and he was trying to balance the blade when his daughter burst through the garage door, holding the phone in her little paws while she did that *'I'm all excited'* dance in front of him.

“Aunt Valerie wants to talk to you, Daddy!” Sarah squealed, holding the phone up for him to take from her.

“Thank you Sweetie,” he replied, taking the phone offered. “Hello?”

“Hi Wally, this is Valerie. Hey, I have someone here that I know you will want to talk to,” she stated, not particularly waiting for her brother to reply before giving Frank the phone.

“Valerie?” Wally inquired when the noise on the other end sounded like the receiver was being passed around.

“No, this is Frank.” the tiger from the past replied.

“Frank? Hmm, your voice does sound familiar to me but I can't put a face to that voice.” Wally offered up.

“My voice should be familiar, Walt. We hung out together so much, the femmes at school said we might as well be brothers.”

“You have me at a loss, my friend.” Walter put forth. “It's been ages since some fur has called me Walt, though. Not since high school.”

“Come on, Walt. Who called you that?”

“Well, Frank Hellyer called me . . . that . . .?” Wally's voice trailed off as he finally made the connection. “You're Franklin Hellyer?” he questioned, sounding totally stunned. After a moment, he asked another very important question. “Are you at my sister Vicki's house?”

“You are correct on both accounts.”

“Let me talk to my sister, please?”

“Okay, Walt. I'll put her on right now.”

“Hello Wally.” Victoria bid once she had the phone in paw.

“Vicki, tell me just what in the hell Frankie is doing in your house!” The eldest Connell sibling demanded.

“I think you can thank the Malefic Council for that.” the tigress replied. “I just looked online and the Modesto Bee obituary said Frank's body was never found.”

“You know that's not right!” Wally put forth. “He was still in the car when the fire-furs arrived!”

“Look, I don't know how this changes things.” the middle sibling stated. “He's here now because some evil fur thought it would drive a wedge between Torvald and myself.”

“Well . . . Gah! I don't know, Vicki. This makes my head hurt.” Walter admitted. “We had better have Mom go see the Hellyers before Frankie goes to see them, though.”

"I agree, Wally. Um, would you like to talk to Frank?" she asked.

"Yeah, put him on. Fair warning, though, I will be down in the morning to see him."

###

Frank sat down in one of the swivel recliners to talk with his close friend and catch up on things, leaving the two Connell siblings to themselves. Valerie took the laptop from her sister and put it away while Victoria exercised her wrists a bit more. Once the younger sibling was done with that chore, she looked at her sister's wounds again.

"I think your wrist wounds have finally stopped bleeding," Valerie offered up, checking her sister's wrists and insteps. "You know, we had better let you move your feet a bit before they get stiff on you."

"You're probably right," Victoria agreed, bringing up her left leg so she could attempt to remove the soft walking cast that surrounded it from just below the knee down. "Maybe I should try to stand for a bit while I'm at it."

"Do you think you're up to it?" Valerie asked. She was concerned with the amount of injury to her older sibling's feet and the possibility of causing more damage to them by standing up.

"Well, I'm not sure but it seems like I should try at the very least," Victoria mused.

"Vicki, maybe you should exercise one foot at a time?" Valerie brought up. "I think you should remove only one cast at a time so the other foot is supported while you try to walk around."

"You're right; I should try it one foot at a time," Victoria agreed.

The elder tigress finished removing the soft cast over her left foot and lower leg and sat it aside for now. Allowing Valerie to assist her in standing, she finally made it to her feet, favoring the bare one. Waiting until she regained her balance, the tigress took a tentative step forward. Setting that foot down, her left one, the tigress steeled herself for the pain that would come when she put her weight on that injured limb.

"Blast that hurts!" Victoria spat out through clenched teeth, waiting until her vision came back to her after she took a small step forward with the booted foot, finally taking her weight off of her left one. That wasn't quite as bad as she thought it would be but it still hurt like the devil.

"Are you okay? Do you want me to get your wheelchair?" Valerie asked. She was certainly concerned about her sister's condition. Victoria had lost a lot of color in her nose and lips since she had stood up.

"No, I've got this under control," the elder tigress stated not too convincingly through gritted teeth. "Just stay behind me with your paws on my waist, just in case I lose my balance," she instructed as she took another very small step forward with her bare foot.

"Sis, look, if it's hurting you too much, let me get your chair for you," Valerie begged.

"In for a penny, in for a pound," Victoria countered in a strained voice. "I have to do this," she added, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"You don't have to torture yourself," Valerie put forth while her sister took another small step with her

right foot, putting her body weight down on that bare foot.

“No, I've got it,” was the reply while the elder tigress took another small step with her bare foot. “Look, I'm doing just fine.” she pointed out, trying not to grit her teeth from the pain. She wasn't going to admit to the white spots that were dancing in front of her eyes or the pain-induced nausea that she was suffering.

“You don't look like you're doing so good from my viewpoint,” Doctor Peyton offered up, standing by the front door with his arms crossed in irritation. “Victoria Svensen, you are a terrible patient. You don't follow orders very well, do you?” he added as he crossed the room to assist Valerie in supporting the tigress by getting in front of her and putting his paws under her arms.

“I'm okay, please?” Victoria begged as she grasped the doctor's forearms for support. “How long have you been watching?” she inquired.

“I've been watching for long enough, Victoria. Look at me,” the moose asked, making her look up at him while he spoke to her. “Any mortal would have never walked again from an injury like the ones you've received. Because you're immortal, you will walk again, provided you decide to follow my orders.”

“I was doing fine.” Victoria put forth. “I need to walk again. I will not spend the rest of my life in that blasted wheelchair.”

“Gah, are you ever stubborn.” Bruce mused, shaking his head. “Valerie, is her left foot bleeding? Please look for me.”

The younger tigress knelt by her sister and gently lifted her left foot up, just to confirm the current condition of the wounds to her instep. “No, it's not bleeding.” she stated.

“Thank the stars.” the doctor said under his breath before addressing Victoria. “Listen, I'll let you take a few more steps, then we'll switch out the boots and let you walk back to your wheelchair. What I want you to do is this; take a few steps each day just like you're doing right now, adding two or three more steps if you can until you're better. Your sister has heard me say this so you can't tell me you didn't know what I wanted you to do concerning your rehabilitation.”

Victoria finished her lap of the living room, totally exhausted and in some serious pain at the conclusion. While she rested in her wheelchair, the doctor removed the soft cast on her left leg to examine her wounds in greater detail before putting some new orthotic offloading walking boots on her. They were two-piece clamshell design boots, manufactured from carbon fiber that covered her entire foot from toe to just under her knee with a rigid ankle design.

The insides of the boots were fully padded with a plastazote foam of a specified density but the intention was a snug fit to hold her feet immobile. There were four hook and loop straps that held the boot closed, allowing for some adjustment and there were rocker soles on them to assist with a normal gait when walking. Wearing two of them at the same time meant she wouldn't be doing any walking except maybe on crutches unless she had one boot off, exercising that foot.

“You're to wear these orthotics full time except when you're doing your daily walk, taking a bath or you're in bed.” she was instructed. “I had these made just for you so they have a special density plastazote insole with allowances made for your injuries to keep the pressure off of them.”

“Not much wiggle room in them if you ask me,” Victoria mused, trying to move her toes inside the

boots.

“There is not supposed to be a ton of room in them, Mrs. Svensen. I think you should remember when we did the moulds of your legs for these boots, I admonished you to remain as still as possible while the casting medium set up firmly. Now sit still while I look at your wrists.” Doctor Peyton asked, looking at her other injuries. “They’re the lightest boots I could have had made up for you. You really need to keep those feet and ankles immobile to facilitate healing because I would hate to see the tendons become re-injured or one of those wounds become an open ulcer. Given your rate of healing, I’m guessing you will need to put up with this for maybe two to three more weeks, tops.” Bruce frowned, then continued with his thoughts. “I’m sorry if I seem a bit blunt with this situation but you really need to follow my instructions to the letter.”

“An open ulcer? How does that happen?” the tigress asked, now that her doctor had brought that up.

“When there’s not enough blood circulation, a wound sort of scabs over thinly but there is not enough blood flow to facilitate new flesh production. Sometimes the scabs look good, like your feet but that is the limit; no new flesh and skin.” the doctor explained. “The wound just sits there, doing nothing. Eventually, if the wound gets infected, it’s all downhill from there, usually ending up in an amputation.”

“I think I’ll just follow your orders.” Victoria offered up, grimacing at the thought of losing her feet to infection.

“Okay, now I really like how your wrists are looking.” the moose commented while he put the casts back on the tigress’ arms. “I would think you can leave the casts off for two hours a day until I say otherwise. No heavy lifting, a limit of five pounds maximum and I know all of your grand-kits weigh over five pounds.”

“Thank you.” Victoria offered as she tried to find a way to position her arms for comfort.

“No, Thank you.” Bruce retorted. “I’m actually looking forward to being out of the business.” he added. “I’m tired of looking over my shoulder to see who’s coming after me. I’ve had too many close calls during my servitude to The Malefic Council.”

He shook his head, then continued. “Recently I had to go assess a femme Elemental Controller’s condition that was being used by a demon to channel her abilities, sending wave after wave of tornadoes at some Agents Of Light. She was dying, I have to tell you. I’m actually not sure why she was still living, possibly due to being immortal or something of that nature.

“I tried to do what I could to keep her conscious but I was losing the battle. Every little gain was rewarded by numerous skipped beats of her heart. The demons kept shouting at me to keep her going but it was no use. I finally injected her with a paralyzing serum that slowed her heartbeat to practically nothing, making her vitals flat-line as if she had died.

“Nurse Wood quickly turned off the monitors and pulled the sheet over her head, acting as if our patient had actually perished. I really don’t know how we managed to snooker the demons into believing she was dead but we did. We quickly apologized for her death right before Tina transported the three of us out of there, then she made a few quick jumps here and there with us to make sure our tracks were covered. When it’s possible, I would like to bring her here where she could recuperate properly. That poor femme is in real dire condition right now.”

“She is an Agent, right?” Victoria asked.

“Yes, she is an Agent of sorts, I guess, not a Dark Agent but not exactly an Agent Of Light, either.”

Victoria gave the moose a crooked smile. “If she's an unwilling Agent, no matter what side, we will do what we can for her.”

“I appreciate that gesture.” the doctor replied. “I know you don't have room for her right now but maybe when your home is repaired, she could come and recuperate then.”

“Where is she now?” the younger tigress asked.

“She's at Jenna's farm at the present.” Bruce replied. “She's safe there because Jenna's farm was warded by the ancient Shamans. Demons are extremely unwelcome there. That includes Surt.” That got the elder tigress' attention.

“I remember Jenna saying something about that.” Victoria brought up. “She said something about the only reason she could step foot on that land was because she's a full-blood Choctaw.”

“I'm Mawatani, or Mandan, as the other tribes called us so I can step foot on her land.” Doctor Peyton related to the two tigresses. “I was born near Minot, North Dakota on a Reservation, I received my medical training in the Air Force and then I went back to the Reservations to give back to my people after my commission was up. It was during that time that I was contacted by Jenna because she needed a doctor to see after an injured associate. It's all been downhill since then.”

“So you regret your work for The Malefic Council?” Valerie asked.

“Every last minute.” the moose replied. “I've never caused injury or death, though. That's where I draw the line. There have been times that I wanted to let a demon or a Dark Agent die but my oath keeps me from doing that. Like the time I had to restore Thammuz; he was so butchered up, I almost didn't know where to start.”

“You restored him?” Victoria asked.

“Yeah, more or less. He still looks bad, though. He's regenerating but not very fast, since he has numerous missing pieces that still have to regrow.”

“Well, I was the one that worked him over for injuring Torvald right before Tor and I did in Zagam.” she offered up.

“It figures.” doctor Peyton mused. “I had heard that a powerful Agents Of Light team had did the extensive work on him. You and your husband would most certainly not be the furs that I would ever want to try to go up against. Your reputation precedes you in the Underworld.”

“I have heard that from various sources.” Victoria agreed.

“Well, that's why the Malefic Council keeps trying to turn you and your husband to the Darkness.” Bruce commented. “You are powerful Agents that could be the ultimate Dark Agents. You have been to the other side and you know that the Gods, specifically *The Almighty* and a few other minor deities really don't care what happens to their worshipers on the mortal plane.”

“Bruce, I have to disagree with you in a big way.” Victoria put forth. “If a butt-load of Dark Agents suddenly burst on the scene, right here in this reality, do you honestly think The Celestial Order would ignore what was going on? Would they automatically just assume that Tor and I or whatever Agent was available, would go looking for the bad furs and dispatch them, once some Agent got wind of what was happening?”

“Victoria Svensen, you and I will just have to agree to disagree.” the doctor countered. “At one point, there were over fifty Dark Agents and minor Operatives right here on you and your husband's behalf, something that should have created a massive 'Hot Spot', if you'll pardon the pun, a huge 'blip' on The Order's radar.” he pointed out. “Willi Delancey's parents are still full, active Agents Of Light and I sure didn't see either of them at the hospital, kicking demon behind. I was actually very afraid that they would show up at some point in time and cause a scene, like trying to destroy me, for instance.”

“I see your point.” the tigress admitted. “So, let's just say that for argument's sake, the Gods don't care. What happens when we start cheating them out of Agents? They still will not care or interfere with us?”

“No, I don't think so.” Bruce offered up, frowning at the thought. “I think once your group starts decommissioning Agents, both sides will bring everything in their arsenal to bear on you. I think it would be a good idea to get either the Celestial Court or The Consortium on your side, before you get down to business.” After a moment of thought, he added, “It might not hurt to prepare for this.”

###

Rumjal sat on the the remains of a retaining wall in the Svensen's back yard, waiting for his 'relief watch' to make his appearance. This had been a very long day for him; cleaning up deconstruction debris, moving subflooring and then assisting a carpenter with his job, reframing a wall. Not what he thought he would ever be doing on the mortal plane. It was a good thing that his former brethren in Heaven couldn't see him right now, dirty from head to toe. Not how a minor Deity should be remembered.

From his vantage point, he could see that femme wolverine warrior was assisting some fur in stabilizing a small mobile bunkhouse next to the Svensen's temporary home, most likely to provide sleeping space for the 'extra' furs he had thrust upon them. Since no fur had left all bloody and beaten, it was obvious to him that the plan hatched by Zagam had failed. He pondered whether to tell the Immortal Couple that he had a paw in the situation.

“Hey Boss!” the black terrier greeted the pachyderm, sitting down by the gray one. “So, what's the deal, here? Who do we kill?”

“You will kill no fur, do you hear me?!?” Rumjal hissed back. “I've been blackmailed to the nines, Morris. If harm comes to the Svensens or their family, I die.”

“Aw, Boss! Come on, let's just wipe them out and go!” the canid suggested enthusiastically.

“Okay, you do that.” Rumjal implied. “When Wendi and those blasted witches start killing me, I'll bring you to the fun and let you share in being destroyed!”

“Wendi?” Morris asked carefully.

“Yes, Wendi and maybe Aslaug, too.”

“Oh, Shit . . .” The Dark Soldier looked up at his commander and shook his head. “You really got the shaft, didn't you?”

“That's being polite.” Rumjal replied. “So, if any Dark Agent comes skulking around, you let me know. No harm whatsoever may come to any fur in that mobile residence. Is that clear?”

“Clear, Sir.” Morris replied.

“And you have a third shift coming?” the pachyderm inquired.

“yeah, I hope so. If not, I'll pull two shifts.”

“Good.” Rumjal commented. “Now I'm going to go get a bit of rest, right after a long, hot soak in a hot, soapy tub.”

As Rumjal left the site and headed back to his lair, he gave thought to this. Morris was a good Agent, one that you could trust completely. The deity wished he had a few more just like the terrier. As long as Morris didn't ask a Construct Operative to take third shift, maybe tomorrow's meeting with the Svensens would prove fruitful.

All of this was started when he decided to wrest control of The Malefic Council from Lucifer and Surt. He knew if he had the Svensens as his Agents, he could use them to influence other Agents to follow him. With enough of a following, he could take control. Rumjal was sure the Council had caught wind of what he wanted to do, once in control.

What the pachyderm wanted to do was to make the Underworld a better place, just so the mortals would see it as a viable alternative to Heaven, Asgaard and the others. That idea didn't set good with with The Light Bringer. Maybe that's why no member of the Council had come to his aid.

###

Jennifer stood on her front porch, enjoying the afternoon sun on her face. The day had started out rainy but the clouds had finally burned off and the sun shone brightly. This just reinforced her desire to be out of the business. Right now, she needed to take care of a little bit of business standing in front of her.

“Jennifer! My feet are burning!!” the slight gray canid shouted, trying to keep one bare foot off of the ground while restrained by Lorna and Duncan.

“Shouldn't have come here.” the otteress stated bluntly. “You know the rules; call me, then we meet on neutral ground. The wards on this land prevent demons and their spawn from walking on it.”

“Dammit! My feet are on fire!!” he blurted out through gritted teeth. “Please? Let me up on the porch or gimme back my shoes?? Please??”

Jenna made a gesture with her right paw, making the canid find himself with his feet encased in blocks of ice.

“Is that better?” the sorceress asked sarcastically.

“Now they're freezing!!” the canid replied, trying to lift one foot, only to find the block weighted about fifty pounds.

“Will you make up your mind? Heat or cold? I can't do both at once.” the otteress indicated.

The male greyhound gave her a dirty look. “Okay, just leave the blocks. The boss sent me here to give you an assignment.”

“What is this job?” Jennifer asked, slowly making her way to face the canid muzzle to muzzle. “It had better be good. I do not waste my time on trivial projects.”

“This is not a trivial job.” the messenger pointed out. “Zagam told me you will have to take the job and complete it.”

“I will think about it.”

“No, Zagam says to do it or he will come looking for you himself.” the canid stated.

“Oh, very well. What is this urgent job?” Jennifer asked.

The canid smiled maliciously. “You must find and kill all four of the Svensen children. You have seventy-two hours to complete the job.”

###

Jennifer looked at the scorched spot on the ground that was the messenger just moments ago, still smoldering. Her anger had boiled over, forcing her to terminate the courier's life early. Some fur had leaked her plans to the Council, no doubt. Now things had just went from bad to worse. She knew that she needed to round up her group and warn them about what had just transpired.

Walking back up to her front door, she motioned to Duncan, nodding. She knew he would bury what remained of the canid, preferably off of her land. Wishing she could do the same thing to Zagam, she shook her head. What would she do now? It was a Catch-22 situation; fail to take action, and she was toast. Do the job and find herself and her associates with no way out of the business. What to do?

A search through her liquor cabinet found her favorite, Glenfiddich 12 year old Scotch. Finding a tumbler in her kitchen cabinet, she sat down at the table to have a sip and ponder her new assignment.